



Press Release

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 16, 2011
www.socialsecurity.gov/oig

Contact: Jonathan Lasher
Phone: (410) 965-7178

Social Security Inspector General Report: *Impact of Alien Nonpayment Provisions on Field Offices Along the Mexican Border*

Requiring Social Security beneficiaries who reside in Mexico to visit the United States regularly to maintain their benefits has a significant impact on some field offices along the U.S.-Mexico border, according to a recent report from Social Security Administration (SSA) Inspector General Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.

The Inspector General's staff visited four offices along the U.S.-Mexico border that are among the most visited by beneficiaries who seek to establish presence in the United States. The report found that three of the offices each provided services to a monthly average of 1,000 beneficiaries who reside in Mexico but need to establish presence in the United States to continue receiving benefit payments. According to SSA's alien nonpayment provisions, an alien residing outside the United States for six full consecutive calendar months cannot be paid benefits beginning with the seventh month of his or her absence.

Providing services to such a large volume of beneficiaries increases workload; lengthens customer wait times; and, during high traffic days, results in office space issues. Requiring routine visits to the United States also places a burden on beneficiaries. The Inspector General learned that some beneficiaries travel great distances and incur significant personal costs to establish presence in the United States.

The Inspector General said SSA could reduce field office workload and improve customer service by considering alternatives to beneficiaries' routinely visiting field offices to establish presence in the United States. For example, SSA could explore the use of biometric technology to verify the identity of beneficiaries, and work with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to verify the identity of beneficiaries at border crossings.

In response to the report, SSA said it would "...collaborate with DHS to explore biometric technology options and work with DHS to verify identities of beneficiaries at the border."

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADOBEPDF/A-08-10-20140.pdf>, or for more information, contact Jonathan Lasher, Assistant Inspector General for External Relations, at (410) 965-7178.